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by Richard W. Braddock, P.Eng.  
President

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Recently, there has been a spate of newspaper articles and statements by politicians commenting on the difficulties encountered by foreign-trained professionals in becoming established in Canada. The November/December 2001 issue of *Engineering Dimensions* described the admissions process for PEO and challenges faced by foreign-trained applicants (p. 30).

Now, in the light of a new initiative on the part of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE) is embarking on a study titled "From Consideration to Integration." Due to our purely regulatory mandate, our association, as a member of CCPE, is supporting this initiative but only from the viewpoint of admission to PEO. It is anticipated that the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (the Society) will become involved in the integration phase of the study.

Norman Williams, P.Eng., PEO's deputy registrar, admissions, and Max Perera, P.Eng., a six-year veteran of Council and former co-chair of the Admissions, Complaints, Discipline and Enforcement (ACDE) Task Force, have been named to serve as members of the Steering Committee and Executive Committee for this HRDC-CCPE study.

PEO has made it quite clear that it wants not merely to validate the findings of others, but also to provide a leading role in the study, given its wide experience in admission and, quite frankly, its disenchantment with previous CCPE programs in this area.

At the outset, it was feared that the broad objectives of the project would be narrowed down to a project focusing on foreign cre-

## Providing access

dential recognition. PEO has been assured that this is not the case, and certainly with representation on the steering and executive committees there is an opportunity to provide input and guidance. Let me share some statistics with you.

Fully 30 per cent of PEO's 65,000 members are foreign-trained engineers and 40 per cent of PEO's new licences are issued to foreign-trained engineers.

In 2002, PEO received applications from about 2000 foreign-trained engineering practitioners, compared to about 1450 applications in 2000.

Approximately 20 per cent of applicants have all technical examinations waived based on the quality of their engineering education.

A further 20 per cent will withdraw their application upon learning that they do not have the requisite experience for licensure, or that they do not require a professional engineer (P.Eng.) licence to continue in their chosen career.

A majority of the remaining 60 per cent will have an Experience Requirements Committee panel interview and 65 per cent of those who are interviewed have the examinations waived. Consequently, about 20 per cent of applicants deemed to have acceptable engineering experience are required to write technical examinations.

In January of this year, PEO received about 470 new licence applications, of which just slightly fewer than 50 per cent were from foreign-trained individuals. With the federal government now looking to attract even more trained people from elsewhere to augment the Canadian work force, these numbers can only increase, since Ontario attracts the highest number of immigrants.

Inevitably, there are those who apply who do not meet PEO's requirements for admission. Some of them write complaining of mistreatment or prejudice. I want to state quite categorically that PEO is obligated to accept anyone for membership if the applicant meets the standards set for admission. I suggest that the statistics given above support this commitment.

In 1998, the ACDE task force chaired by the Honourable Mr. Justice Douglas

Carruthers, QC, and Max Perera examined the admissions process with respect to fairness, consistency and transparency. The enactment of the last of the recommendations including one dealing with appeals, is imminent (see News, p. 10); all other recommendations have been adopted.

However, PEO has the far-reaching over-all mandate to set standards in order to protect the public interest, and this consideration must be paramount.

Of course, admission does not depend only on academic learning; there are experience requirements. The stumbling block to satisfying these requirements is in many cases the one that requires at least one year of experience doing engineering work in Canada.

Some employers are not prepared to employ an immigrant without the credibility that PEO licensure provides. PEO, thus, has introduced a Provisional Licence that confirms that an applicant for admission has met all other requirements with the exception of that of Canadian experience (see News, p. 10).

However, it should be emphasized that in this province there is no legal impediment preventing a person being engaged in engineering work. The limitation contained in the *Professional Engineers Act* is that a licensed professional engineer must take responsibility for that work. Therefore, failure to obtain a licence is not in and of itself a barrier to employment in the engineering field.

By and large, I have every confidence that the admissions process is working well, and here I would like to applaud the work of staff and, more particularly, the volunteers who serve on the Academic Requirements Committee and on the Experience Requirements Committee. These are the people who help to make the admissions process work. They are recruited from all disciplines and are often foreign-trained. PEO is continuously looking for input from the engineering community to help in this area. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Tom Chessell at PEO.

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